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ABSTRACT

With budget limitations, additional expectations and accountability requirements, changing enrollment trends, teacher shortages, need for new kinds of services, and other difficulties faced by rural communities, partnership arrangements with the private sector and higher education promise new avenues for rural education to meet future obligations. While activities vary depending on school and partner needs, interests, and resources, partnerships develop relationships fostering trust, enhancing communication, exchanging information, reducing stress, instilling a sense of participation, and presenting positive images to both school and community. Fundamental elements in partnership development are friendbuilding (through a cultivation cycle emphasizing identification, information, interest, involvement, and investment) awareness, mutual benefits, leadership, group dynamics, common goals, institutional mission, human parameters, initial financial support, communication, shared perceptions, documentation, guidance from outside agencies and organizations, and institutionalization of ongoing programs. Successful partnership activities include classes for students at business sites, summer youth job programs, career education, school staff internships with partners, executives-on-loan, and adopt-a-school programs. Ten partnership programs between Georgia Southern College and the region's schools include community education centers, vocational education workshops, cultural arts programs, and mini-model United Nations. (NEC)

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RURAL SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS WITH HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

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National Rural Education Forum

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RURAL SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS WITH HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Rural School Partnerships with Higher Education
and the Private Schools

Never before have our schools been confronted with greater opportunities to serve and more demands to satisfy--nor been confined by tighter constraints. This triple challenge calls for a new dimension of creative and cooperative effort if public education, particularly in rural schools, is to meet the nation's growing expectations. Cooperative relationships, or "partnerships," which join schools with other forces and resources in our communities offer that potential.

Not only do partnerships build new bases of material support for a school system, they also build bridges for better understanding of schools' needs and practical limitations. And because partner organizations consider themselves, as the term suggests, "part of the team," they become workers, supporters, and promoters for their schools.

The concept is flexible and mobile, applicable almost anywhere there is a school and one or more organizations with a joint and genuine interest in working together for a common goal.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the conditions for rural education and partnership development, to illustrate ways partnerships are working right now and to explore avenues for successful partnerships between rural schools and higher education and the private sector.

RURAL SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS WITH HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

INTRODUCTION

Never before have our schools been confronted with greater opportunities to serve and more demands to satisfy--nor been confined by tighter constraints. This triple challenge calls for a new dimension of creative and cooperative effort if public education, particularly in rural schools, is to meet the nation's growing expectations. Cooperative relationships, "or partnerships", which join schools with other forces and resources in our communities offer that potential.

Not only do partnerships build new bases of material support for a school system, they also build bridges for better understanding of schools' needs and practical limitations. And because partner organizations consider themselves, as the term suggests, "part of the team", they become workers, supporters, and promoters for their schools.

The concept is flexible and mobile, applicable almost anywhere there is a school and one or more organizations with a joint and genuine interest in working together for a common goal.

When Dr. Ernest Boyer was U.S. Commissioner of Education some years ago, he stated the case for partnerships in the imperative: "The need is to be cooperative, not because it is the 'gentlemanly' thing to do, but because it is the urgent thing to do."

His words are even more prophetic today. If our schools have opportunities to reach more of their goals through partnership efforts, then we must grasp these advantages. If we don't, then we're not doing all we can

to make our schools the best they can be, and that means we're letting down our schools and ourselves.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the conditions for rural education and partnership development, to illustrate ways partnerships are working right now and to explore avenues for successful partnerships between rural schools and higher education and the private sector.

A GLANCE AT RURAL EDUCATION

For the purposes of this paper, rural education refers to programs concerned with meeting the educational needs of populations living outside urbanized areas, in open country, in small communities, or in areas of extended cities with a low population density. Two-thirds of our nation's schools meet that definition, and one-third of our school children attend such schools.

The past 30 months have been the most tumultuous period in the history of education in America. It has gone from the depths of both the fair and unfair assessments of a "Nation at Risk" to broad reforms across the full spectrum of concerns and is on its way to substantial progress in laying a solid foundation for a more effective educational system during the balance of this decade.

While the public and press were mesmerized by these developments, similar kinds of exciting transitions in rural education went virtually unnoticed. Nevertheless, the new focus on rural education is real, not only recognizing its continuing growth, but also promising renewed importance and

enhanced quality for a large and overlooked segment of our school population.

What more and more people are coming to realize is that the rural way of life in America is worth preserving. Rural America enjoys a richer and more deeply rooted cultural heritage and stability than later-model, more transient urban centers. Rural Americans are characteristically sensitive, responsible and caring, and among the finest people anywhere. In the opinion of former U.S. Secretary of Education, Terrel Bell, "Rural America represents much of what is good and enduring in our society and contains many of those traditional American values that will keep our society strong in future years."

The rural population in America is now approaching the 60 million mark and, with the large non-farm growth, is experiencing greater diversity than ever before. As the rural population has shifted, rural schools have had related changes, some for the better and some not. Although urban and rural schools have much in common, there are some distinct differences and certain clear-cut advantages and disadvantages for rural education that still exist.

Counted among the advantages and strengths of rural schools are: smaller classes where individual attention is often the order of the day; more opportunities for students to take leadership positions and develop their individual talent; a higher student participation rate in extra-curricular activities. Also, schools are natural community centers in rural settings, providing a community closeness and a focus for community activity. In fact, sometimes it's difficult to determine where education

ends and community life begins in rural America because of the integration and interdependency that exist between the rural school and its community.

Education researcher Paul Nachtigal found a continuing momentum for decentralization in American society, toward what he labels a "demassified society." He described the commonalities of the diverse elements of the countryside: "... in small towns there still exists a personal, tightly-knit sense of community. People tend to be generalists, not specialists; there is a minimum of bureaucracy; the small size, personal nature of relationships is conducive to shared decision making, everyone can have their say..."

Nachtigal also reminds us that in rural America: "Values are more traditional. The labor force is made up of entrepreneurs rather than corporate employees; rural people are more inclined to make do, responding to environmental forces rather than rational planning to control the environment. There is more of a spirit of self-sufficiency, taking care of one's own problems, than one finds in the city, where problem solving is left to the 'experts'."

Two other researchers, Roger Barker and Paul Gump, found that the greater involvement of rural students in activities reinforced their academic work and enhanced the education process: "The proportion of students who participated in district music festivals, and dramatic, journalistic and student government competitions reached a peak in high schools with enrollments between 61 and 150. The proportion of participants was three-to-twenty times as great in the small schools as in the largest school. The number of extracurricular activities and kinds of activities

engaged in during their four-year high school careers were twice as great in the small as the large schools."

Rural people, as a general rule, are satisfied with their schools. In a study by Faith Dunne, Chair, Department of Education, Dartmouth College, the majority of teachers, administrators and school board members commented that "their small schools do a good job of teaching basic skills, maintaining good discipline, keeping the curriculum up-to-date, controlling alcohol and drug abuse, fostering good communication between teachers, students and parents, and keeping facilities up-to-date."

On the other hand, just as there are certain distinct advantages for rural schools, there are also some well-known, serious disadvantages. Instructional Specialist Mary B. Livingston, Utah State Education Department, expressed this rather well when she said, "Being a small school administrator is like trying to put a sox on an octopus."

Among the problems of rural schools are: longer distances to be traversed and concomitant transportation costs and complexities; greater isolation and fewer cultural resources, such as museums, community libraries, theatres and concerts; insufficient big-ticket assets, such as laboratories, libraries and specialized equipment; greater staffing difficulties, with teachers often covering different subjects, some outside of their primary field; increased poverty levels and more handicapped children than in urban schools; higher costs per student since "economies of scale" cannot be utilized; and a general lack of adequate financial resources.

Another serious difficulty for rural education and rural America is the "image problem." Unfortunately, in many minds, "rural" often connotes a

lack of ability, of culture, or of other qualities rather than a viable alternative to an urban setting.

In addition, rural America is very heterogeneous. Rural people, rural communities, and rural conditions are enormously diverse, with a resultant increase in complexity in public policies, leading to a complexity in programs which affect rural circumstances.

One of the greatest negative impacts on the rural scene is imposed by a form of general policy making, which might be called the "urbanization of rural systems." For example, in education, urban approaches are too often forced on curriculum, on teacher education, or on structure, giving rise to policies and methods which are not directed towards creating better rural schools and systems but instead aimed at creating wholesale urbanization of most aspects of rural society. As a result, approaches to problems in rural areas are frequently urban approaches, and too often fail or fall short in their effectiveness.

This is symptomatic of the nation's lack of "rural" awareness and has lead to assignment of inadequate attention and resources to rural education. Previously existing strategies, have too often served, consciously or inadvertently to ensure that existing deficiencies in rural education continue unabated.

In a major policy statement from the U.S. Department of Education, in 1984, Secretary Bell observed that, "In recent decades, the changing dynamics of our urban centers have forced public policy decisions which tend to emphasize solutions to urban concerns."

He went on to say that "While the Department of Education remains committed to programs that help urban youth and adults, it is appropriate

that we strengthen our efforts to provide programs that address the educational needs of rural and small town youth and adults."

The U.S. Department of Education responded by approving a new policy relating to rural education entitled, "Rural Education and Rural Family Education Policy for the 80's." This policy represents a substantial and progressive new thrust for rural education:

> "Rural Education shall receive an equitable share of the information, services, assistance and funds available from and through the Department of Education and its programs."

Since the announcement of this policy, new initiatives have begun within the U.S. Department of Education and across America toward the enhancement of rural education.

These include: the development of "partnerships" among students, teachers, parents, the community, higher education, and business and industry to create better schools; an expansion of research efforts to help understand rural education and its circumstances and to find ways to upgrade its relevancy and effectiveness; an increase in rural education data bases to provide the necessary technologies to disseminate information valuable to curriculum, organization, personnel and support services needed for education institutions serving rural communities; and a national conference on rural education bringing together participants from business and industry, schools and colleges, and local, state and national governmental agencies.

Although the problems of rural education are still immense, these school systems--comprising two-thirds of our schools and one-third of our students--are critical to the proper long-term development of America.

The U.S. Department of Education policy plus many new approaches and initiatives for rural education, especially those involving partnerships, do

give a new sense of hope and excitement for those involved in and touched by rural education.

AN OVERVIEW OF PARTNERSHIPS

Governor of Arkansas Bill Clinton, born and raised in a rural setting and the first person in his family to graduate from college, knows where of he speaks when he reminds us that "bigger is not always better" and "what is best for the children, is what is best!" A Rhodes Scholar with his degree from Yale, the Governor went on to say that "A child in the smallest hamlet will be competing in a world with children from urban areas and from around the world. Each child must have a competitive education!"

One of the most creative approaches today towards overcoming the concerns for rural education and providing each child with a "competitive education" is the formation of partnerships between our schools and other appropriate groups and organizations.

Pennsylvania Governor Richard L. Thornburgh, whose state was the first to emphasize partnerships on a statewide basis, declared that "If we really expect to create a 'rising tide of quality' in the classrooms..., then it will take all of us, working together, on a scale that may never before have been attempted."

Again quoting former U.S. Secretary of the Department of Education, Terrel Bell: "Rural Schools are excellent places for new private sector partnerships, especially those that are concerned with utilizing the new educational technology--computers, video discs, T.V., video cassettes, etc.,

uniquely suited to compensate for rural isolation and lack of cultural and financial resources."

As long as 20 years ago former U.S. Education Commissioner Francis Kappel emphasized the importance of partnerships with the schools when he wisely noted, "Education is much too important to be left solely to educators."

Governor Thornburgh's "Private Sector Initiative Task Force," in its publication "Partnerships in Education," clearly defined and discussed the concept. Partnerships in education are voluntary formal arrangements between schools and public or private sector groups which are designed to combine the energies and resources of the partners to enrich various aspects of the education process.

Partnerships foster special bonds of cooperation and mutual respect between schools and communities. They are the means by which schools can benefit from local resources and talents. Ultimately, partnerships serve the interests of the students, the schools, the business community, non-profit organizations, and the community as a whole.

From the Pennsylvania report, we get a closer look at what partnerships offer:

--For the schools, an opportunity to bring the outside world into the classroom; increased incentives for students to stay in school; experiences leading to more informed career choices for students; support for new or expanded programs; management and planning assistance; and a broadened base of support for the schools.

--For the private or public sector partner, an expanded view of the quality and needs of education institutions within their communities; long term improvement in work-readiness and productivity of the local workforce; improved climate for business through a vital and healthy public school system; and visibility and recognition for valued public service.

--For the general public, improved understanding between and among key elements of the community; stimulation for other cooperative efforts within the community; and realization of the impact the life of the community has on the quality of the public schools.

Types of partnership activities vary depending on school and partner needs, interests, and resources -- and may be short or long term. Some examples might include classes for students at a business site; development of new curricula reflecting current technology and practices with assistance from partners; summer job programs for youth; career education and exploration; school staff internship programs with partners; mini-grant programs to supplement school programs; executives-on-loan to assist district management operations; and adopt-a-school programs.

The beauty of genuine partnerships is that they can develop relationships fostering trust, enhancing communication, exchanging of information, reducing stress, instilling a sense of participation, and presenting a positive image to both school and community.

Recognizing the growing importance of private sector involvement in education, President Reagan launched the national Partnership in Education Program in October, 1983, and proclaimed school year 1983-84 as the National Year of Partnerships in Education to acknowledge efforts of the private sector and to encourage creation of new partnerships in education all across the nation.

From a survey conducted by the U. S. Department of Education, completed a year ago, of nearly 17,000 school districts across the country, 22 percent reported that one or more partnerships existed in their district. In addition, another 25 percent indicated interest in establishing such programs. A total of 46,338 different kinds of sponsors were reported

by the districts that had partnership relationships. Small business comprised the largest proportion of these (37 percent), while foundations were the least common type. The most common resources provided were guest speakers, demonstrations, donations of equipment and materials, and awards.

Probably the single most important national catalyst for partnerships in the rural sector during the past year was the "National Conference on Building Partnerships for Quality Education in Rural America." As a follow-up to the President's proclamation and the recently approved Department of Education Policy, its purpose was to promote the development of partnerships among educational institutions and between those institutions and other public, private, community and governmental organizations and constituencies. The goal, of course, was to enhance excellence in rural schools by marshalling these positive forces for education.

The National Conference, held in Washington in June 1984, attracted more than 600 participants from 47 states and territories, including students, teachers, school board members, education experts, college officials, local, state and federal governmental officials, and private citizens. Many of the state groups went home with new ideas and initiatives and are continuing their efforts to promote rural partnerships. No less than eight states planned for similar statewide conferences to address the topic of partnerships.

In addition to Pennsylvania's excellent Partnership in Education program, Alabama has designed its own model partnership program, Kentucky sponsored a statewide conference on building school-business community partnerships, West Virginia is developing a statewide computer network in a partnership with schools and numerous agencies, and Wisconsin is expanding

its existing state education-business partnerships program to rural education.

EXAMPLES OF PARTNERSHIPS

The highlight of the 1984 National Rural Education Conference was a review of twenty-one model partnerships programs from across the nation. These included:

--Vocational System: Partnership in Southeastern Illinois with nine secondary schools, a regional vocational system, a community college, a prison, and the business-industry of the region to provide broad-based vocational training for eleventh and twelfth grade students.

--Rural Community Education Program: Partnership with Winnebago Industries, Control Data Corporation, Forest City (Iowa) Community Schools and Waldorf College to integrate computer-based education into school programs, initiate a computer literacy program for the community and to expand and enhance the educational offerings of the community.

--Programming for Community Involvement: Partnership with local governmental agencies, health services, business associations, recreation groups, township citizens (Hampton Township, Newton, N.J.), parents and educational agencies to facilitate cooperation in education among local community groups and schools and to promote student awareness of the role various civic and community groups play in the life of the schools and community.

--Math Teacher Employment Project: Partnership with West Point (Virginia) Public Schools and the Chesapeake Corporation of Virginia to solve the math teacher shortage problem and offer high level math courses.

--Tele-Learning Network: Partnership with the Garfield (Utah) School District, Dixie College and the Utah State Office of Education to provide educational opportunities for students in important but difficult to offer subjects through a live, tele-learning network.

--Small School Leadership Training Program: Partnership with eight small, rural school districts, Texas Tech University, and Pedamorphasis, Inc. to provide leadership training for school personnel toward applying research knowledge for effective schools and setting instructional goals.

--Teacher Exchange Program: Partnership in North Carolina with Greenville and Washington City Schools, Duplin and Pitt County Schools, and East Carolina University to provide opportunities for public school personnel and university faculty members to increase their understanding of each other's responsibilities and to develop additional linkages between the public schools and the university.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships present an added dimension for rural education to obtain "more with less." If education is to deliver its full potential through our schools we must find ways to bring more benefits with less bucks. As we look to the future, we must be realistic in realizing that more will be asked from our schools, but there will be proportionally fewer resources available with which to respond.

At last year's National Rural Education Conference, James K. Coyne, Special Assistant to President Reagan, reminded us that "Education is the responsibility of every single individual, business and organization in this country." The corollary to that is, then, that since partnerships can substantially enhance education in America, they also become the "responsibility of every single individual, business and organization in this country." Not only must our schools be responsible for the development, implementation and success of meaningful partnerships, but so must community leaders, business and industry, higher education institutions and others.

All of us have much to gain directly and indirectly through successful partnerships, and thus have a responsibility to participate in a genuine and appropriate manner. Consequently, a first premise on which to build partnership development is that <u>all</u> have a reasonable responsibility for

partnership formation and should be expected to participate in meaningful, relevant ways. Don't be afraid to ask and to expect cooperation from others!

However, the initial leadership responsibility for partnerships in rural education rests squarely on the shoulders of our schools. Others will help, but we must take the initiative. President Reagan posed the challenge when he launched the National Partnership in Education Program in October 1983:

> "I'm issuing a challenge to America to ensure our children get the best education they deserve. Let us resolve that every one of our country's public, private and parochial schools and community colleges--all 110,000 of them--will have formed a partnership in education."

For the sake of our children in rural America, we need to accept the President's challenge and move forward vigorously with partnership development in the schools in each of our communities and regions.

TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS

The truth is that all of our schools are already involved with partnerships in one way or another. The arrangements can be as simple as working with business to recognize special student talent, having a vocational education work program with local industry, or assisting a college by supervising students in their practice teaching experiences.

Although the types of partnerships discussed in the earlier section, entitled "Examples of Partnerships," are especially meaningful illustrations, they tend to be more complex and possibly more comprehensive than the

typical partnership. To avoid the danger of becoming over-awed by certain partnerships and giving up before real progress has been attempted, it's important to appreciate that valuable partnerships run the gamut from simple two-party cooperative efforts to more grandiose, complex, multiple-party arrangements. Indeed, more of the former will be developed, and they can have just as positive and important an impact on our schools' effectiveness.

The best kind of partnership is one that fits the needs of the partners and circumstances of the community, and allows for educational goals to be more successfully attained. Some partnerships will be rather limited in scope and complexity, while others must be comprehensive and multi-faceted to achieve the desired outcome.

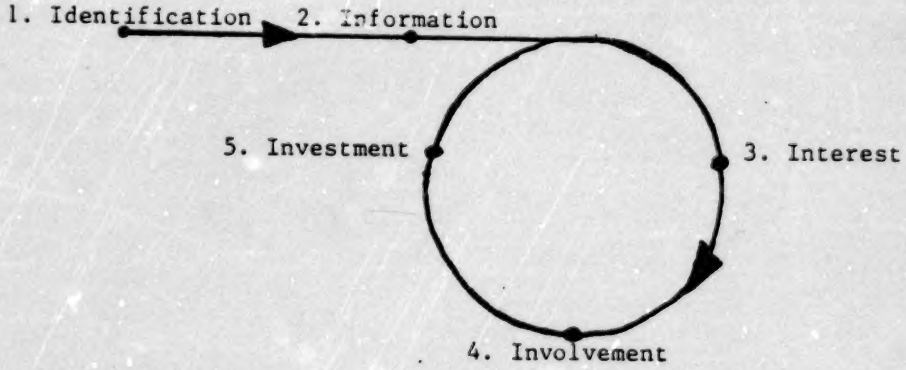
Remember, partnerships in education are any formal arrangements between schools and others in which the partners working together match educational needs with available resources to improve the quality of education within a community. Partnerships come in an almost infinite number of sizes and shapes, but all are created to improve the effectiveness of our education programs.

FUNDAMENTALS OF PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

FRIENDBUILDING: A helpful parallel to partnership building is "friend-building." Developing meaningful relationships and friendly attitudes are really the critical core of successful partnerships. If schools can build "friend" relations with elements of the private sector and higher education, then they have laid a good foundation for valuable cooperative efforts.

If, on the other hand, such relationships don't exist, partnerships are almost impossible to effect. The more successful that schools are with friendbuilding, the more successful they will be in building effective partnerships. Friends work hard at trying to find ways to help one another!

CULTIVATION CYCLE: The cultivation cycle for developing friendships and cooperative investment can be summarized through the following diagram and five key steps.



In cultivation work, we must:

1. Identify those with whom we hope to develop a relationship.
2. Provide them with appropriate information about our school and its needs and aspirations.
3. Create in them an interest in our cause and activities.
4. Involve them meaningfully in aspects of our programs and goals.
5. Build the relationship to the point of interest and involvement so that they choose to invest their resources, time, equipment, etc. in our enterprise.

This process is "tried and true," and if genuinely implemented will usually lead to a successful conclusion.

AWARENESS: One of the major stumbling blocks to be dealt with early in the partner-building process is awareness. What is the prospect's perception of rural education, our school, educational needs of the community and so on? Often, cooperative efforts don't get off the ground because we have not prepared our prospect with the right information.

It needs to be recognized from the outset that most people do not understand rural education, its needs, its strengths and weaknesses, and how it can be the most important element in the advancement of the local community and rural America.

For example, many industries located in rural areas are managed by people born, raised and educated in an urban environment. Hence, many of them have little understanding of the various aspects of rural education. Unfortunately, the same is true of people who came out of the rural setting; they were part of the setting but, in fact, never fully understood the many complicated aspects of rural education and rural schools.

As a result, the school must have an appreciation of the circumstances of rural education discussed in the earlier section entitled "A Glance at Rural Education" and use these to inform, plan and build a case. The wrong perceptions about rural education can defeat creation of a partnership arrangement. If the proper information is understood and accepted, the partnership is well along in its establishment.

MUTUAL BENEFITS: Business, industry, colleges, and others, motivated by self-interest and by a sense of community responsibility, are increasingly receptive to finding ways to help schools and students prepare for the future.

For any partnership to work, it must first be mutually beneficial. Partnerships must result in some real benefit for each partner, the other organization(s) as well as the school. Benefits from a partnership for schools might include new or increased funding, technical and advisory assistance, teachers for hard-to-staff subjects, equipment, relevant practical experiences for students, leadership and teacher development, recognition programs, enhanced community awareness, and greater public support.

By the same token, business and industry can gain from the preparation of better potential employees, a positive, community-spirited public image, an opportunity to help direct and set priorities for the schools and community, an enhanced community environment in which to recruit future employees, and financial benefits such as income tax deductions.

Relating this to fundraising, people and organizations find greatest joy in their resources when they: make it, save it, and give it. Similarly, successful partnership development requires rural schools finding mutually beneficial activities so that others will experience "special joy" from investing in the school effort.

LEADERSHIP: Liaison activities with outside people or organizations are the responsibility of school officials, board members, superintendents, principals and directors. Early cooperative contacts cannot be delegated. The support of the school administration is critical, and only the leaders can set the proper tone.

If leadership is not committed, most partnership initiatives are doomed, and future prospects are damaged by leaving a bad impression with the outside group.

Once an initial commitment to cooperate on a project is secured, follow-up efforts frequently can be delegated to another appropriate school official. Ideally, the individual providing project leadership responsibility should have many of the following characteristics:

1. A strong personal commitment to cooperation.
2. Adequate stature (i.e., level of position and perception as a leader) to garner the respect and support of the leadership and teachers of the school.
3. Credentials in the field or area in which cooperation is to take place.
4. The authority to speak, in a general sense, for the institution during negotiations.
5. A personality that is both creative and capable of rising above personal bias and parochialism.
6. Status that is reasonably comparable to that of the other participants.

GROUP DYNAMICS: Cooperative discussions among various organizations and their representatives typically go through three stages of group dynamics:

1. Participants/organizations getting to know one another.
2. Participants/organizations developing a mutual trust.
3. Progress in negotiating and establishing a partnership agreement.

The first stage is often the most difficult and time-consuming. However, the group will not make real progress until the participants/organizations become more familiar with each other, and any hidden agendas are out on the table. To encourage the second stage, trust, periods of inactivity and deliberate stalling in the negotiations should be avoided. Since pride and vested interests are natural in any individual or organization, it is important not to concentrate on motives, but rather to correct percep-

tions and challenge points that are inconsistent with circumstances. Each participant needs to be seen as a person of good will who must represent the interests of his/her organization, but who is still able to compromise.

As the group becomes better acquainted personally and professionally, hidden agendas and conflicts are more likely to emerge for discussion, and a sense of trust and community established. When participants come to perceive the mutual benefits of a cooperative effort, real progress can be achieved. Position or issue papers can often provide concrete starting points for cooperative agreements.

COMMON GOALS: An approach which enhances the early stages of partnership development is to establish goals which clarify the target, focus each participant's thinking, and encourage a group perspective to form. These goals should be identified early and re-emphasized from time to time. Initially, the group should agree on broad philosophical issues and ideals and not try to be too specific.

Institutional autonomy too often has been considered an essential condition for the health of each organization. However, insistence on autonomy in forging cooperative agreements can be counterproductive. This problem can be managed by continually keeping the common goals and mutual benefits of the partnership discussion at the forefront of everyone's thinking. Remember, enhancing quality education in the schools for the betterment of the total community is always a strong common goal to build on.

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION: Each organization should have a mission statement which gives its raison d'etre and highlights its constituencies, the

services to be offered, and approaches to be taken. These statements should be discussed early in the cooperation process. Since organizations cannot be expected to change their special missions, the group has to understand these position statements and work within the constraints imposed by them. However, it is unlikely that any of these mission statements would be in serious conflict with the common goal of quality education in the schools, and there should be ample flexibility for cooperative achievement.

DATA BASE: A good data and information base about the school and its desired activities is essential to effective cooperation. Such data and information should include information fundamental to an accurate perception of the school, the institution's circumstances and needs, a preliminary conceptualization of the proposed project (e.g., who, what, why, how and when), and a sense of benefits to be derived from the partnership. The data and information need to be sufficiently accurate and complete to be accepted by all participants and respected by those reviewing the process.

HUMAN PARAMETERS: The major constraints to effective partnership development are usually neither organizational nor professional, but human, our personal shortcomings in relating to one another. Some behavior patterns that can encourage cooperation include the following:

--Appreciating the personal values and needs of individual participants, their goals, and their feelings about the outcome.

--Recognizing that everyone wants to know "What's in it for me?" and that each participant must be able to defend the arrangement "back home" at his or her organization, perhaps to semi-hostile groups.

--Containing competitive instincts, avoiding put-downs, particularly in areas in which some organizations are more advanced than others.

--Pointing the way to solutions, acknowledging concerns, delineating the consequences, and setting goals. This involves "disturbing the comfortable and comforting the disturbed."

--Recognizing that each individual with his or her unique vantage point is a key element to cooperation.

--Assuring that each person appreciates the perspectives of other persons.

--Recognizing that every group has its own personality and understanding that character makes it easier to succeed.

--Coming up with constructive alternatives to issues that are being challenged.

--Being prepared to make reasonable trade-offs and compromises.

INITIAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT: Although helpful, initial funding is not critical to successful cooperation. For those genuinely interested in cooperation and partnership development, initial efforts can begin with little or no funding. (In fact, the possibility of outside funding is one of the strongest motivating forces for getting your people to try hard at cooperation.) The desire for cooperation and the philosophical support for it are far more important than initial financial support.

COMMUNICATION: One of the essential elements in successful cooperation is open communication. If something happens that might be perceived by someone as negative, it is vital that those involved inform the others at the first opportunity. Lack of communication can become a major block to cooperation.

There must also be regular and timely communication between the representative and the home school or organization. Each participant must

take on this responsibility. The dialogue on the status of partnership efforts should be factual and relatively complete.

PERCEPTIONS: As partnership discussions progress, it is important to be aware of how the effort is being perceived by others. Reactions will range from supportive to critical. How the effort will be perceived may depend on what the representatives of the organizations do and say. For instance, if a staff member from a participating organization publicly criticizes the effort, it will be harder to convince others of the potential for its success. If one organization's representative attacks another organization's representative, then he or she weakens the credibility of the effort. And if it appears to the supporters of an organization that their side came off second best in a compromise, then that organization will find it more difficult to accept and approve the proposal. Such perceptions are critical to the success of partnership activities.

DOCUMENTATION: During the course of discussion, many agreements will be reached and accepted. For simple matters oral agreements may suffice, but they will not be adequate for substantive issues. Before they are formally accepted, agreements of substance must be written so clearly that they leave no room for ambiguity to the representatives or outsiders. Since fuzziness in agreements leads to misunderstandings which grow into major barriers, written agreements should accurately reflect the accepted concepts and provide formal evidence to the home organization and the outside world that progress is being made.

OUTSIDE AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS: Cooperative activities need guidance from practitioners and the input of related community and professional

organizations. With their advice and assistance, the probability that partnership agreements will be accepted is greatly enhanced.

As cooperation among institutions begins to take shape, the credibility of these efforts rises, and the potential for additional outside funding of the cooperative activity--beyond that of the participating organizations--is significantly increased. Because there is great interest in encouraging schools and other organizations to work together, there is a natural tendency among funding agencies and foundations to assist such projects.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION: Institutionalization of cooperation and partnerships is the process by which these become part of the ongoing programs of the school. It requires that administrators and teachers at the school understand the various aspects of cooperation and partnerships and accept their conditions. Because acceptance depends on communication with all school personnel, each harboring his or her self-interests, institutionalization of cooperation is not an easy task. Several steps can enhance the effort, including:

1. Strengthening the mechanisms for communicating the concept of cooperation within the institution.
2. Continuing support of cooperative efforts by administrators at all levels.
3. Holding special discussions and programs on cooperation and partnerships and their potential for advancing the school.

A ROADMAP FOR PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

There is no one formula to ensure a successful partnership program; because each community in rural America is unique, so are most partner-

ships. Keeping the "fundamentals" discussed in the previous section in mind, there are some simplified roadmaps which give an additional sense of direction for partnership development. One such outline, or roadmap, for schools to follow in starting their own partnership program is:

1. Talk with your teachers and staff to assess the needs of your school and community.
2. Seek out private sector and/or higher education institutions which you feel could assist in meeting those needs.
3. Keep in mind that commitment from all cooperative partners at the highest levels is essential.
4. Set realistic goals which are perceived to be agreeable to all involved. It is usually better to start out small and then expand once the program is operating successfully.
5. Designate an individual from your school or school district who is willing to act as coordinator or representative for the program.
6. Remember that this is a cooperative effort, a partnership, where everyone must benefit. Think about ways in which you can benefit your partner.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH COLLEGES

Partnerships between schools and organizations in the private sector are important and have been discussed and illustrated by examples in previous sections. Similarly, partnerships between schools and institutions of higher education are especially critical for the fulfillment of the maximum potential of schools in rural America.

Such partnerships will be illustrated in this section by examples of cooperative and partnership relationships existing between the author's institution, Georgia Southern College, and the schools of southeast Georgia. Georgia Southern College, a state-supported institution, has 6,500 students and 156 academic degree concentrations (associate through the doctoral degree), and is committed to working with the school systems in southeast Georgia to enhance their effectiveness. Southeast Georgia is a large, predominantly rural region covering approximately one-third of the state.

Partnership and cooperative programs between Georgia Southern College and the region's schools include:

1. The Coastal Area Teacher Education Service: A consortium of institutions of higher education and the school systems of southeast Georgia which provides graduate coursework for teachers in essentially every school district in the region.
2. Leadership Training for School Personnel: A partnership with the school systems of the region whereby superintendents, principals and other school leaders return to the College periodically for leadership development programs.
3. The Learning Analysis Center: A cooperative effort with the schools of the region through which the College analyzes students who are potentially learning disabled and assists the school with an appropriate improvement program for the student.
4. The Community Education Center: A partnership arrangement with a number of school systems in the region toward the development and implementation of community education programs offered through the local schools.

5. Vocational Education Workshops: A cooperative program at the College through which the schools can have prepared prospective vocational education teachers for their system.

6. Field Services: Cooperative arrangements with individual schools to provide school research, accreditation assistance, curriculum development, planning, and other relevant services.

7. The Georgia Southern College Museum: A facility and programming developed at the College for students from the region which allow them to be exposed to exhibits, displays, and other experiences beyond what the local school can provide. Through these programs, students' experiential and learning horizons are expanded, and they discover new alternatives and options for their life.

8. The Marvin Pittman Laboratory School: A laboratory school at the College which works cooperatively with the schools in the development of new teaching approaches and other educational advances. For example, the Laboratory School has provided training for over 1,000 teachers from the region in the creative new method of teaching reading called SUCCESS.

9. Cultural Arts Programs: A set of cultural arts programs developed by the College and offered in conjunction with the schools of the region including:

   a. Statesboro/Georgia Southern College Symphony: The symphony offers a free outdoor concert in the spring; invites all schools from within a 100-mile radius to a free youth concert performed live in the fieldhouse during a school day (the concert during 1984 was the largest to date attracting over 5,000 school children); also

smaller symphonic groups (e.g., quintets) visit and play in the area schools.

b. A Youth Arts Festival: The Art Department of the College offers annually programming carrying special art and other performing arts into the schools which involves several thousand children in art-related projects. The culminating event is an all-day Saturday art festival on campus attracting and immersing 3,000 children in a broad spectrum of art-related activities.

c. The Georgia Southern College Suitcase Theatre: The Theatre Program of the College annually creates special drama programming for school children. The troupe performs both in the schools and in special on-campus presentations during a week-long running of a children's play (children are bussed to the College for this).

10. The Mini-Model United Nations. The College conducts a three-day mock United Nations program for nearly 400 high school students from the region.

CONCLUSION

A mainstay in education in our country today and tomorrow is our rural schools. With all of their difficulties and limitations, they still provide the backbone for a strong and progressive America.

With budget limitations, additional expectations and accountability requirements, changing enrollment trends, teacher shortages, rural America's need for new kinds of services, and other difficulties faced by our rural communities, partnership arrangements with the private sector and higher

education promise new avenues for rural education to meet future obligations.

In an October 1983 letter, U.S. Secretary of Education Bell captured the significance of partnerships when he wrote:

> "'Partnerships in Education' can provide you and your school with unique opportunities to broaden and enhance the learning experiences of your students. I encourage you to take advantage of the momentum surrounding this important initiative and get together with the leaders in your communities to explore ways in which your school could benefit from a partnership with the private sector. It is an investment in our country's greatest resource--the promise of our future generations."

There is little doubt about the tremendous opportunity for our rural schools through partnerships. The only question is whether our school leaders will aggressively pursue partnership developments. Because of the great potential partnerships hold for our rural schools, an approach something comparable to what President Theodore Roosevelt describes might well be in order:

> "In the battle of life, it is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of a deed could have done better."
>
> "The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotion, spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who have tasted neither victory nor defeat."

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